

Chicago Tribune

FOUNDED June 16, 1847

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2 Section 5

Monday, October 1, 1979

THE NEWSPAPER is an institution developed by modern civilization to present the news of the day, to foster commerce and industry, to inform and lead public opinion, and to furnish that check upon government which no constitution has ever been able to provide.

—THE TRIBUNE CREDO

Intelligent intelligence measures

The exaggerated flap over Soviet troops in Cuba is the latest example of a change in the nature of criticism of U.S. intelligence. The level of criticism has not abated. But now it comes from a different direction.

Not long ago the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, among other organizations, went through a tortuous public reliving of three decades of misbehavior. In the congressional hearing rooms, the public prints, and on the air they faced merciless judgment — much of it justified, some of it naive. Assassination plans, spying on Americans, plots to topple foreign governments. This was strong stuff, long suspected but kept secret.

Now the concern is not so much if the agencies are doing what they shouldn't but if they are competent to do what they should. The unpredicted Iranian revolution, the mistaken prognostication of a mild Saudi Arabian reaction to the Egypt-Israel peace argument, the belated estimate of North Korean military strength that caused the Carter administration to postpone indefinitely any troop withdrawals from South Korea. These have all come together to make "massive intelligence failure" the all-purpose interpretation of choice for Washington commentators, replacing "cover-up."

There is no question that some of the remedies applied to intelligence abuses have caused the CIA problems in gathering intelligence and using its resources to carry out U.S. foreign policy. Nor did the demoralizing ordeal of revelation and castigation do morale any good.

As congressional committees scrambled to get a piece of the well-publicized intelligence agencies, the CIA found itself under an obligation to report all covert actions [activities that go beyond

the collection of information] to eight separate committees. The odds of keeping an action disclosed to eight committees covert are about the same as the odds against hitting the lottery. One important step in rebuilding the CIA and other intelligence agencies is to centralize oversight in two committees — one for each house — or one joint committee. This would be a reassurance to our allies, who must by now regard telling the CIA something in confidence as the rough equivalent of putting it out in a news release.

Some revision may be required in the procedures governing the CIA's collection of information about Americans abroad, though care should be taken not to declare open season on every American traveler.

Perhaps the CIA deserves some relief from the burden of Freedom of Information Act requests and the risk of inadvertently disclosing something of value to a hostile intelligence service. But any revision of the act should be done with care so as not to reinstate the CIA as the fortress of secrecy it once was. Secrecy is as dangerous as it is important, so a delicate balance must be struck.

Revision of the laws penalizing disclosure of classified information — one of the CIA's more emphatic demands — should be approached charily. The agency should have the ability to punish its own employees for unauthorized disclosures, but extending the criminal penalties beyond government employees or contractors raises serious 1st Amendment problems.

It is time to recognize that the period of intelligence agency reform has given way to a period of rebuilding. The challenge is to avoid a wild swing of opinion which results in the undoing of the important legal safeguards now in place.

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

STATINTL
 SUBJECT: (Optional) Editorial Entitled "Intelligent Intelligence Measures," Chicago Tribune,
 1 October 1979

FROM:

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

2 October 1979

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S
INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

STATINTL

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1. Office of Public Affairs
 ATTN: [redacted]

For retention. Unclassified.
 Ref [redacted] elecon,
 1 October 1979. Attached editorial ran in the local editions of the Chicago Tribune, 1 October 1979. The general tone of the editorial is more favorable to the views of the Agency than any other editorial we have seen in this paper during the past two years. Believe this is a direct result of the talk the DDCI had with the editorial board of the Tribune during his recent visit here.

(opinion)

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Attachment: As stated

cc: Deputy Chief, [redacted], DCD [redacted]

STATINTL

also appeared
 2 Oct 79